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A Centennial Discourse,

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE PRESBYTERY OF LEXINGTON,

SYNOD OF VIRGINIA,

—AT—

Timber-Ridge Church,

SEPTEMBER 25TH, 1886.

THE ONE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY

OF ITS ORGANIZATION.

—BY—

GEO. D. ARMSTRONG, D. D., LL. D.,

FORMERLY A MEMBER OF LEXINGTON PRESBYTERY, AND STATED SUPPLY OF TIMBER-RIDGE CHURCH.

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CENTENNIAL DISCOURSE.

ONE hundred years ago to-day, an Assembly of Ministers, Ruling Elders, and Christian people assembled in this house for the organization of Lexington Presbytery. That Assembly was, I doubt not, very much like that gathered here to-day—probably quite as large; for, though the country was not then as thickly settled as now, the people were accustomed to attend upon religious meetings from a much greater distance—certainly, as deeply interested in what was to be done as we are; for the Presbyterian Church was to them, as to us, not only their Church, but the Church of their fathers also.

From the organization of Hanover Presbytery, in 1755, for a period of thirty years, *i. e.* up to 1785, all the Presbyterian Churches in Virginia had been embraced in that one Presbytery. In 1785, Abingdon Presbytery was organized, embracing the churches in south-western Virginia, beyond New River, together with such churches as then existed in Kentucky and Tennessee. When, a few years later, the Southern Presbyteries were grouped into Synods, Abingdon Presbytery, together with the Presbyteries of Orange and South Carolina constituted the Synod of the Carolinas. In this connection Abingdon remained until 1803, when, by act of the General Assembly, it was transferred to the Synod of Virginia.

In 1786 Hanover Presbytery was again divided, and all its churches west of the Blue Ridge Mountains organized into a new Presbytery, under the name of Lexington. In the subsequent grouping into Synods, which took place two years later, the Synod of Virginia was made up of the Presbyteries of Hanover, Lexington and Redstone, the territory covered by the last-mentioned lying principally in Pennsylvania. At its organization, Lexington Presbytery consisted of the following eleven ministers, viz: John Brown of New Providence, William Graham, James McConnell, Archibald Scott of Bethel, John Montgomery of Winchester, Benjamin Erwin of Mossy Creek, William Wilson of Augusta, Moses Hoge, John McCue of Good Hope, and Samuel Shannon.

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Five of this number appear upon the minutes as without charge, not because they were not regularly engaged in preaching the gospel, but they were not at the time regularly settled as pastors, and the pastoral relation was the only one noticed in the minutes of that day. From other sources than the minutes, we know that Moses Hoge was then preaching regularly on the south branch of the Potomac, in Hardy county, and William Graham was employed in teaching, and preaching at Timber ridge and Hall's meeting-house.

The John Brown mentioned in the minutes as pastor of New Providence Church, must not be confounded with the Samuel Brown, installed Pastor of New Providence in 1793, through whose descendants the name of Brown has been continued an honored name on the rolls of the Synod of Virginia to the present day. Of John Brown I have been able to learn but little, excepting that he became pastor of New Providence Church in 1753, and at the organization of Lexington Presbytery, he presided, by appointment, and was elected its first Moderator, from which facts I infer that he was, in ministerial standing, the oldest member of the Presbytery.

Of the eleven ministers embraced in Lexington Presbytery at the time of its formation, three subsequently served the Church with such success as to challenge particular mention.

1. **William Graham.** When Hanover Presbytery, before Lexington Presbytery had been set off from it, determined to establish a school for the education of young men for the ministry, they placed Wm. Graham, then recently licensed, at the head of it. This school was located at Mount Pleasant, near Fairfield, and here it was that Mr. Graham took charge of it. In the course of a few years, it was judged expedient to remove it to Timber Ridge, where a convenient house for the Rector was built, and also an Academy and other small buildings for the accommodation of the students. And I may remark, in passing, that the Rector's house and the log building in which the school was kept, were standing when I commenced my ministry here in 1838. This school, still under the care of Mr. Graham, was afterwards removed to Lexington, and was the germ from which has sprung Washington and Lee University.

Respecting Mr. Graham, Dr. A. Alexander, who knew him well, having studied under him, writes: "From the time of his ordination by the Presbytery of Hanover in 1775, he became a teacher of Theology, and most of those who entered the ministry in the

Valley of Virginia in those days pursued their studies under his direction. The influence he gained over the minds of his pupils whilst under his care, was unbounded. Yet he encouraged the utmost freedom of discussion, and seemed to aim, not so much to bring his pupils to think as he did, as to teach them to think on all subjects for themselves. A slavish subjection to any human authority he repudiated, and therefore, never attempted to add weight to his opinions by referring to a long list of authors of great name, but uniformly insisted that all opinions should be subjected to the test of scripture and reason."

"In his theological creed he was strictly orthodox, according to the standards of his Church, which he greatly venerated: but in his methods of explaining some of the knotty points in theology, he departed considerably from the common track, and was of the opinion that many things which have been involved in perplexity and obscurity by the manner in which they have been treated, are capable of being easily and satisfactorily explained by the application of sound principles of philosophy. As a preacher, he was always instructive and evangelical, though, in common, his delivery was rather feeble and embarrassed than forcible; but when his feelings were excited, his voice became penetrating, and his whole manner awakening and impressive. His profound study of the human heart enabled him to describe the various exercises of the christian with a clearness and truth, which often greatly surprised his parishoners: for it seemed to them as if he could read the very inmost sentiments of their minds, which he described more perfectly than they could themselves. As a clear and cogent reasoner he had no superior among his contemporaries, and his pre eminence in the exercise of this faculty was acknowledged by all unprejudiced persons."—(*Sprague's Annals, Vol. 3, pp. 368, 369.*

2. **Archibald Scott**, who appears on the roll as pastor of Bethel Church, studied theology under William Graham, and was licensed to preach in 1777. Foote, in his Sketches, Vol. 2nd, relates the following incident, illustrative of the spirit of the times, and the character of the men who formed the original Presbytery of Lexington. "It was Mr. Scott's custom to assemble the children and youth of his charge, on week-days, for catechetical instruction. It was in this employment he was engaged on that memorable Saturday in June, when the approach of Col. Tarlton and his British dragoons spread consternation from Staunton throughout the surrounding Valley of Virginia. It is said that Mr. Scott, like his two neighboring brethern, William Graham and John Brown, ex-

horted the stripling youths of his congregation (their elders were already with Washington) to arm themselves and go with their neighbors, who were rising up simultaneously throughout the county of Augusta, to stand with their arms at Rockfish gap, on the Blue Ridge mountains, to dispute the pass with the invader and his legion. The next day, after prayers in the three congregations for the success of the American arms, the old men and striplings from the congregations of Graham, Brown and Scott, united with others, and met at Rockfish Gap, to resist the inroads of the marauding horsemen William Graham was the master spirit, but he was heartily supported by Brown and Scott, his co-presbyters, in the movement. It was the recollection of this scene, so recently enacted under the patriotic spirit of these three pastors and their people, that gave occasion for the memorable words of General Washington: If I should be beaten by the British forces I will retreat with my broken army to the Blue Ridge, and call the boys of West Augusta around me, and there will I plant the flag of my country.—*Sprague's Annals, Vol. 3, p. 388.*

3. **Moses Hoge**, like Archibald Scott, received his theological training under William Graham, was licensed to preach the gospel in 1781, and ordained the year following. He labored for five years in Hardy county, and then removed to Shepherdstown. "In 1807 he was appointed President of Hampton Sydney College, as successor to Dr. A. Alexander, who had removed to Philadelphia. The Synod of Virginia in 1812, resolved to establish a Theological Seminary within their bounds, and unanimously appointed Dr. Hoge as their Professor. From this time till his death in 1820, he held the two offices, President of the College and Professor of Divinity under the appointment of the Synod. He had the pleasure of seeing about thirty of his pupils at Hampton Sydney licensed and ordained ministers.

"In 1799 Mr. Hoge published a work which attracted very considerable attention, entitled, "The Christian Panoply." It was designed as an antidote to Paine's "Age of Reason." It consisted of two parts—the first containing the substance of Bishop Watson's masterly reply to the first part of Paine's work, and the second, Mr. Hoge's answer to the second part of it. It had a wide circulation, and exerted a very important influence."—*Sprague's Annals. Vol. 3, p. 427.*

Such were some of the men who took part in the organization of Lexington Presbytery one hundred years ago. It has been truly said, "there were giants in those days," and Lexington Presbytery

certainly had its full share of them. Men of commanding intellect and varied learning; devoted to their calling as ministers of the everlasting gospel, yet meeting in full measure their obligations as citizens and patriots; men doing with their might what their hands found to do in the present, and at the same time digging deep and laying sure the foundations for the church of the future. This house in which we are assembled to-day, built in 1750, furnishes at once a symbol and an illustration of the kind of work they labored to do for God. Its massive stone walls have withstood the storms of a hundred and thirty years, and yet stand as firm as the day they were first builded. As a precious heritage, it has descended from father to son through all these years, until in the memory of saints in heaven as well as saints on earth, it is known as a place in which God has shown himself ever willing to meet with his people, and bless them. And the old church promises fair to serve generations yet to come, as well as it has the generations which have already passed onward and upward. They labored, and we have entered into the fruits of their labors.

During the century which closes to-day, how many and how great the changes which have occurred. When our fathers assembled here to organize this Presbytery, the country was just emerging from the sore trials of the war of the Revolution. Terribly crippled in her finances; with her new form of government settled but in part, men's confidence in the old order of things gone, and yet not establishad in the new; and worst of all, a wave of infidelity sweeping over the land, causing the heart of the christian man to tremble within him.

The French nation had stretched out to us a helping hand in our war for independence, and naturally, and properly too, our people felt grateful to them for the help they had given us in our time of sore trial. France was then trembling on the verge of that terrible revolution, the history of which forms the bloodiest page in modern history. Our revolution was one of a christian people against the unconstitutional demands of a tyrannical government. The French revolution, in contrast with ours, was a revolt against christianity in the only form in which they knew it, as well as against tyranny on the part of their civil rulers. Under the influence of the writings of such men as the witty Voltaire and the polished Volney, men who rejected all religions as alike superstitious, adapted to the childhood of the world, to be superseded by "the reign of reason," as they styled it; liberty, with them, meant unbridled license, and free government culminated in the public wor-

ship of a prostitute as the "Goddess of Reason," and the establishment of the "Reign of Terror."

Voltaire died in 1788; Volney somewhat later. The destruction of the Bastile, with which the French revolution may be said to have fairly begun, occurred in 1789. "The Reign of Terror," which marks the culmination of this godless revolution, when Danton and Robespierre condemned countless multitudes to the guillotine, and suffered, each in turn, a similar fate, began in the execution of Louis XVI on January 21st, 1793. I mention these dates thus particularly that you may notice the fact that the beginnings of this most godless of revolutions, in which the very foundations of society were upturned, and not the church alone, but civil government, also, lay for a season a frightful ruin, were cotemporary with the formation of Lexington Presbytery.

Grateful to France for her aid in our war for independence, our people were disposed to welcome to our shore not only French people and French commerce, but French literature also. Voltaire's writings were not generally accessible to American readers, as no extended translation of them into English was ever made. But many of the sarcastic cavils and ribald jests with which he assailed christianity, as well as his red-republican ideas of liberty and civil government, were presented, in a popular form, to our people in Paine's "Age of Reason." Volney's "Ruins of Empires," one of the most polished infidel works of that age, was early translated into English, and widely circulated in our country. I have in my library at home, a copy of this work, purchased at a street book-stand in New York city more than fifty years ago, at a cost of 25 cents, and I may say here, that for the young and ardent I know of no more dangerous book. Free from the gross ribaldry of Paine's "Age of Reason," its specious arguments, its apparent deep sympathy with the woes of suffering humanity, and the bright visions of a happier future to be secured under the guidance of reason emancipated from the control of religion, give it a charm for the better class of young men, which the writings of Voltaire and Paine do not possess.

Insofar as I have been able to learn, the spirit of French infidelity which was rife at the North, and especially in the New England states, at the close of the last century, never prevailed to the same extent in the Valley of Virginia. But it was to meet and refute this that Moses Hoge wrote his "Christian Panoply," already mentioned. And it was the spirit of insubordination, on the part of young men especially, originating in its teachings, which dis-

couraged William Graham in his labors as Principal of the Classical and Theological school which Presbytery had placed under his charge, and led him to resign his office, and remove with his family to a new settlement on the banks of the Ohio. It may be true, as Dr. A. Alexander remarks, that "in taking this step he was not guided by his usual wisdom," but yet the fact remains that he did take the step, under great discouragement as to the prospects of the church; and this fact may give us some idea of the difficulty our fathers encountered in meeting and rolling back the tide of French infidelity which threatened to overwhelm the church during the closing years of the last century and the opening years of the present.

Scarcely had this conflict with French infidelity closed, when dangers of an entirely different character, and coming apparently from an entirely different quarter, assailed the church. A great revival of religion, commencing in East Tennessee and extending over Virginia, especially the western portion of the state, as well as Kentucky, marked the earlier years of the present century. This, in itself, was a thing greatly to be desired, and, on the whole, there can be no reasonable doubt that this revival was a great blessing to the church. A new spirit was infused into her service of the Master, and a new life given to a faith which was ready to perish. But, it has ever been true that when 'the householder sows good seed in his field, an enemy will come by night and sow tares," and so it was in this revival. Along with a true work of grace wrought by God the Spirit, there was a work of the subtle enemy of Christ and His church, which marred the revival, and finally brought it to an end. In these remarks I refer to the bodily agitations commonly spoken of as "the jerks," the wide prevalence of which characterized this revival.

The phenomenon of swooning, or suddenly falling down under religious excitement, has not been uncommon in great revivals, and under impassioned preaching. Such occurrences were very common under the ministry of Whitfield and Wesley, both in this country and Great Britain. The same was remarkably the fact at Camburlang and Kilsyth, in Scotland, during the extraordinary religious excitement which occured in those towns early in the last century, but the bodily agitation called "the jerks" was, in many particulars, a very different affection from this.

The following account of this strange affection is copied from the Princeton Review for July, 1834, and was written by a Presbyterian minister, who had been an eye-witness of what he relates.

"The extraordinary bodily agitation called 'the jerks,' commenced in East Tennessee, at a sacramental meeting, and we have been informed that on that very day, several hundreds of persons, of all ages and sexes, were seized with this involuntary motion. It was at first almost uniformly confined to the arms, and the motion proceeded downwards from the elbow, causing the arms to move with a sudden jerk, or quick, convulsive motion, and these jerks succeeded each other, after short intervals. For some time, no religious meeting was held in which this novel, involuntary exercise was not exhibited by more or less of the audience, in that part of the country where they originated. And, generally, all those who had once been the subjects of it, continued to be frequently affected, and not only at meeting but at home and sometimes when entirely alone. After the commencement of the jerks, they spread rapidly in all directions. Persons drawn by curiosity to visit the congregations where they existed, were often seized, and when they returned home they would communicate them to the people there. But in some instances they occured in remote valleys of the mountains, where the people had no opportunity of communicating with the infected. In East Tennessee and the south-western part of Virginia, their prevalence was the greatest, and in this region, persons of all descriptions were seized, from the aged gray-headed preacher down to children of eight or ten years of age."

"Soon, however, the exercise began to assume a variety of appearances. While the jerks in the arms continued to be the most common form, in many cases the joint of the neck was the seat of the convulsive motion, and the head was thrown back and forward to an extent and with a celerity which no one could imitate, and which to the spectator was most alarming Another common exercise was dancing, which was performed by a gentle and not ungraceful motion, but with little variety in the steps. During the administration of the Lord's Supper, in the presence of the Synod of Virginia, we witnessed a young woman's performance of this exercise for the space of twenty minutes or half an hour. The pew in which she was sitting was cleared, and she danced from one end to the other; her eyes were shut and her countenance calm. When the dancing terminated she fell, and seemed to be agitated with more violent motions. We saw another who had what was called the jumping exercise. It was truly wonderful to observe the violence of the impetus with which she was borne upwards from the ground. It required the united strength of three or four

of her companions to confine her down. None of these varieties, however, were half so terrible to the spectators as that which affected the joint of the neck. In this it appeared as if the neck must be broken, and while the bosom heaved in an extraordinary manner, the countenance was distorted in a very remarkable way."

"Besides the exercises already mentioned, there were others of the most curious and even ludicrous kind. In one, the affected barked like a dog; in another, they boxed with fists clenched, striking every body and thing near them. The running exercise was also one of the varieties, in which the person was impelled to run with amazing swiftness. There were many other singular motions, in imitation of persons playing on the violin, or sewing with a needle."

"The most remarkable circumstance in relation to these various exercises was that persons affected with a peculiar species of jerks, coming into a congregation where that had not been experienced, would commonly communicate it to those who had been affected with exercises of a different kind. Thus, a lady from Tennessee, who brought into Virginia the barking exercise, was immediately imitated by certain of those affected with the jerks, who had never seen anything of this sort before. These nervous agitations were, at first, received as something supernatural, intended to arrest the attention of the careless multitudes, and were therefore encouraged and sustained by many of the pious; but after a while they became troublesome. The noise made by these convulsive motions in the pews was such that the preacher could not be composedly heard, and in several of the exercises, the affected person needed the attention of more than one person to care for him. Besides, nervous agitation or falling was so easily brought on by the least mental excitement, even at home, that many who were the subjects of the jerks, became weary of it, and in some cases avoided serious and exciting thoughts, lest they should produce this effect. It is remarkable, however, that they all united in their testimony, that in the most violent and convulsive agitations, as when the head would rapidly strike the breast and back alternately, no pain was experienced, and some asserted that when one arm only was affected with the jerks, it felt more comfortable than the other throughout the whole day. Perhaps this was imagination. In some places the persons affected were not permitted to come to the church, on account of the noise and disturbance produced. The subjects were generally pious, or seriously affected with re-

ligion, but there were cases in which careless persons and those who continued to be such were seized. The dread of the jerks was great in many, both religious and careless, and, upon the whole, the effect produced was very unfavorable to the advancement of religion."

When I began my ministry here, there were numbers yet living who had witnessed such scenes, as those described, in this very house, and from whom I had an account of what they had seen confirming in every particular the statements of the writer in the Princeton Review. These "exercises" as they were termed, were doubtless, in a large measure, cases of peculiar nervous excitement, but not altogether such. In the judgment of some of the most pious and judicious ministers who lived and labored in the midst of this revival, there was mingled with nervous disorder more or less of demoniacal influence, such as that put forth in the case of the youth brought by his father to Jesus, immediately after His descent from the mount of transfiguration, of whom it is written: "And when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed, foaming." - Mark 9; 20. This opinion I have heard expressed by Dr. Geo. A. Baxter, Professor of Theology in Union Seminary, when I was a student there, and a member of this Presbytery at the time at which the jerks prevailed, or shortly thereafter.

To us, in our day, gathering instruction from the experience of our fathers, this whole subject of the jerks may seem a very trivial matter, and I suppose there would be no difference of opinion among us as to the duty of the church to disapprove of and suppress them. But, appearing as they did, in connection with the beginnings of a great revival of religion, and having in many instances, as their subjects, persons of established character and undoubted piety, we cannot be surprised that our fathers were, for a time, greatly perplexed. As bringing vividly before the mind the grounds of this perplexity, take the case of Rev. Samuel Brown, then pastor of New Providence church, as related in Sprague's Annals. "When the strange phenomenon, the jerks, appeared in connection with the great revival, soon after the beginning of the present century, Mr. Brown immediately commenced an investigation of their character, which resulted in the conviction that they were in no sense the work of the Spirit. Mr. Brown's principal reason for this conclusion, as afterwards given to Dr. Samuel B. Wilson, was: If the Spirit has sent me to preach the gospel, it surely cannot be the same Spirit that prevents me from deliver-

ing my message, or the congregation from giving it serious attention—reasoning which reminds one of Paul's reasoning about the disorderly "speaking with tongues" at Corinth. Under this conviction he opposed these bodily "exercises" rigorously, and succeeded in keeping them out of his congregation almost entirely, while they prevailed in most or all the congregations around. Among those who were deeply grieved at this course was a venerable elder in a neighboring congregation — a man of eminent piety, and withal one of Mr. Brown's most attached friends. This elder made him a visit, with a view of remonstrating with him, and convincing him, as he believed, of his mistake. After a long discussion, he found his arguments all disposed of, and went away silenced, but not satisfied. In the course of a few days he repeated his visit, confident that he should then be able to accomplish what he had failed to do before, but he met now with a discomfiture more signal than the first. The gray-headed old man, as he rose to start for home, in the warmth of his feeling, grasped Mr. Brown's hand, and said with great earnestness: 'Mr. Brown, I cannot reason with you, but I am right and you are wrong, and I solemnly warn you that if you do not cease your opposition to this work of God, you will cease to be useful, will lose your christian comfort, and at last die under a cloud.' Mr. Brown simply replied: 'I am willing to leave it all in God's hands.' Many months after, the good old man came back to visit him, and acknowledged that he was himself in the mistake, and asked forgiveness for what then seemed to him his unreasonable and ungracious remarks."—*Sprague's Annals, Vol 4, p. 76.*

It was well for our church that she had in her ministry at that time such men as Samuel Brown; men who, when they had reached a conclusion as to what the truth of God was, were willing to live up to their convictions at every hazard. To their influence we must trace the fact that the Presbyterian Church in Virginia retained its integrity, whilst that of Kentucky and East Tennessee was rent asunder. For it was in the conflict over these bodily exercises, regarded by some as a special work of God, and by others as, in part at least, a work of the devil, that the division originated which led to the formation of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

After the disappearance of the jerks, our churches enjoyed a season of quiet prosperity for some twenty-five years, and then began the troubles which resulted in the rending of the Presbyterian Church throughout the United States into the two bodies

afterward known as the Old and New School Churches. The exscinding acts, as they were called, by which the four synods of the Western Reserve in Ohio, and Utica, Genessee and Geneva in New York, were declared to be no part of the Presbyterian Church, were adopted by the General Assembly of 1837. This was the overt act which consummated the disruption, but the real cause of that disruption had been at work for years before. I was a student in Union Theological Seminary in 1837, when the disruption actually took place, and was licensed to preach by Lexington Presbytery in September, 1838, so that the early part of my christian ministry was passed in the midst of the commotion attendant upon the disruption, and what I shall say of that sad time of trial for our Church will be largely from my own personal recollection.

In the year 1801, the General Association of the Congregational Churches in Connecticut proposed to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church a plan of cöoperation, or plan of union, as it was more frequently called, to meet a difficulty arising from the fact that in the newly settled portions of the country, especially in Western New York and Ohio, the population was frequently made up of Congregationalists and Presbyterians in about equal numbers, neither denomination being strong enough to maintain gospel ordinances by itself. The plan, as finally adopted, embraced the two following provisions, viz: (1) That Congregational ministers might be regularly settled as pastors of Presbyterian churches, and Presbyterian ministers as pastors of Congregational churches without change in their ecclesiastical connection, and (2) That mixed churches of Congregationalists and Presbyterians might be organized, and the immediate government of such churches should be by a Session of regularly ordained Ruling Elders, according to the Presbyterian plan, or by a Committee elected from time to time, according to the Congregational plan, as the majority of members might choose. There can be no doubt that the difficulty which this plan of union sought to obviate was a serious difficulty in many newly settled portions of the country; nor, that the plan itself was adopted by our fathers with the best of motives, but in its practical operation it proved disastrous.

The Presbyterian and Congregational churches of that day were, in their faith, essentially one: but in their systems of government and in their practical methods of doing the work of the church, they stood very wide apart. The government of the particular

church, according to the Presbyterian system, is in the hands of a session, consisting of a Pastor and Ruling Elders, all regularly ordained to their work, and at their ordination required to accept the Confession of Faith as a creed, with a right of appeal from the decisions of this Session to the Presbytery and higher courts of the church. According to the Congregational system, the government of the particular church is in the hands of a Committee of unordained men, who have never adopted any confession of faith, but the brief summary of doctrine to which they gave assent at the time they were admitted to the communion, with no right of appeal from the decisions of this Committee but to the assembled membership of the particular church to which the appellant belonged. In carrying forward the general work of the church—its work of education for the ministry, and of domestic and foreign missions, for example—the Presbyterian Church, in its Presbyteries, Synods and General Assembly, has an organization for doing its work under the immediate direction of the Church, and with direct responsibility to constituted authority on the part of all executive officers. The Congregational Church, having no such organization, must do this work through the agency of Voluntary Societies.

For a time, this plan of union seemed to work smoothly, and not only Presbyteries, but Synods were formed, consisting largely of mixed churches, which could in no way be held to proper responsibility to the courts of the Church. Then came a great revival of religion, especially powerful in Western New York and Central Ohio, under the ministry of Rev. Charles Finney and others, beginning about 1827–8. This revival, like that in our own section of the country, a quarter of a century before, was accompanied with many departures from the orderly worship to which Presbyterians were accustomed—the introduction of "new measures" as they were called, and in the case of some of the leaders, a departure from sound doctrine also. When the attempt was made to correct these disorders, and to discipline certain men who were teaching doctrines at variance with our standards, the attempt was constantly frustrated, in consequence of the irregular constitution of the four Synods subsequently exscinded. So, in conducting the benevolent operations of the Church, especially in the department of domestic missions, the American Home Missionary Society, a Volunteer Society, properly the organ of the Congregational Churches of New England, was constantly coming into collision with our Presbyterian agencies operating with the

same end in view. This society gathered its funds, in part, from our churches, and yet it was alleged, threw the whole weight of its influence in the new settlements in favor of Congregationalism, and against Presbyterianism.

For such reasons as these, the "plan of union" designed to give harmony to the operations of the two churches, became a fruitful source of discord, and for several years before the disruption in 1837, the Presbyterian Church was practically divided into the two great parties, then and afterwards known as the New and Old School. In the Assembly of 1835, the Old School party were in the ascendancy, and they initiated measures looking to the reform of the abuses which had crept into the church, for, as a matter of fact, the "plan of union" had been made to cover a great many cases such as were never dreamed of when it was originally adopted—e. g., Congregational ministers owning no allegiance to the Presbyterian Church, and committee-men who had never adopted our standards, through an election by the mixed Presbyteries, had been admitted to seats in all the church courts, even the General Assembly, and by their votes in certain instances had decided cases carried up by appeal, in which the peace and purity of the church were involved. In the Assembly of 1836, through the management of Dr. Absalom Peters, Secretary of the American Home Missionary Society, as it was said, the New School party found themselves in the majority, and they speedily undid the work of the preceding Assembly.

This action thoroughly aroused the Presbyterian feeling in the sections of the church in which the Old School party predominated. And the Assembly of 1837, when it came together, was found to be most decidedly Old School. I have already remarked that for several years the church had been practically divided into the two great parties of the Old and New School, and recognizing this fact, the first movement in the Assembly was to attempt a quiet and peaceable division. A committee was appointed, embracing the leading men of the two parties, to arrange, if possible, a plan of division. The committee subsequently reported that in their judgment, a division was desirable, but as to the terms upon which this division should take place, they could not agree. "The Plan of Union" was then abrogated as "unconstitutional in so far as the action of the Assembly of 1801 was concerned, having never been submitted to the Presbyteries, and totally destitute of authority, as proceeding from the General Association of Connecticut, which was invested with no power to legislate in such cases."

This abrogation was carried by a vote of 143 to 110; and I give this vote as I believe that it represents pretty fairly the relative strength of the Old and New School parties in the Presbyterian Church in the United States at that day. This action was followed by the adoption of "the exscinding acts," i. e., resolutions declaring that the Synods of the Western Reserve in Ohio, and of Utica, Genessee and Geneva, in New York, said Synods having been formed under a plan of Union unconstitutional and therefore void from the beginning, were no longer a part of the Presbyterian Church.

Many in our Southern Synods who believed that a division of the Church was inevitable, and in all the circumstances of the case desirable, and who had no sympathy with the measures and doctrines known distinctively as New School, yet regarded the exscinding act as unconstitutional and unnecessarily harsh, and so far sympathized with the exscinded Synods as to withdraw from the Old School portion of the Church and to unite with those Synods in forming what was afterwards known as the New School Presbyterian Church in the United States. The first New School General Assembly was organized in Philadelphia in 1838; and the final separation within the bounds of the Synod of Virginia took place the same year. That spring the Presbyteries constituting the Synod of Virginia, reported to the General Assembly 140 ministers. The year following they reported 106. The entire Presbytery of Abingdon, "Old Abingdon Presbytery," as it has been called, numbering 7 ministers, went with the New School. The entire Presbytery of Lexington and that of Greenbrier, which had been set off from Lexington but a year before, numbering together 48 ministers, went with the Old School. The other Presbyteries were divided. And this division was not limited to the Presbyteries, but particular churches were rent asunder, and New and Old School Churches stood side by side in the same field.

In effecting this division of the Church there was a great deal of crimination and recrimination indulged in on both sides, and as a consequence of this, an estrangement between brethren and a great deal of bitter feeling awakened. All association of the churches of the two schools was discountenanced; and when Presbyteries, and Synods, and even their General Assemblies met in the same place, they refused to commune with each other. For some years the two divisions of the Presbyterian Church seemed, practically, further apart than either of them was from other evangelical denominations. In parts of the country where no division

had taken place, as within the bounds of Lexington Presbytery, the condition of the Church was comparatively quiet. But where the plough-share of division had been run—and roughly run—as in the city of Richmond, for example, for a looker-on to have said "behold, how these brethren love one another," would have been about as sharp a satire as the tongue could have uttered. As I look back, it seems to me almost incredible that such a state of things as I have described could ever have existed. And yet, I do not think that I have overdrawn the dark picture.

Gradually a better state of feeling began to prevail; and this better feeling within the bounds of our Synod, was owing, in part, to a revival of the Christian graces in the hearts of our ministers, and to the influence of revivals of religion in our churches; and in part to the fact that a few years after the division the New School Church of the South was compelled to withdraw from the New School Church North, by the rampant abolition spirit which manifested itself there. For several years before the reunion at the South occurred, the way had been gradually opening for it.—Ministers of the two schools resumed the friendly relations of former years, and began to exchange pulpits and to preach for each other on special occasions, and private members passed freely and without censure from one church to the other. But it was not until the war of 1861-'65 compelled the Southern portion of the Old School to assume an independent position, and an organization distinct from that of the North, that the way for reunion was fully opened. In 1864, after a careful comparison of views by large committees of the Synod of Virginia and the United Synod, as the New School body was called, finding that whatever difference as to Presbyterian policy and doctrine there may once have been, there were none remaining in the way of their coming together with mutual respect and confidence, the breach, after lasting for 26 years, was finally healed; and one Presbyterian church now covers the whole teritory of the Southern States as it did in the beginning. A few years later the Old and New School churches at the North united also.

The separation of the Southern Presbyterian church from that of the North, in 1861, was caused immediately by the war between the States. The history of that separation the men of another generation will write more correctly and impartially than we.—There are two facts, however, belonging to this part of the history of our church in Virginia I must mention, viz: (1) The influence of the late war upon the piety of our people was not as disastrous as

it was in the war of the Revolution. There was no influence of infidelity, claiming admittance under the guise of counsel from a friend to whom gratitude bound us, during the late war, as in that of the Revolution. The leaders of our great armies, especially the army of Northern Virginia, were men of decided piety. The daily life of such Christian men as Robert E. Lee and Thomas (Stonewall) Jackson could not but have a happy influence on the armies under their command. The churches, too, from the beginning, cared for the soldiers. They were members of our churches and members of the families of which our churches were made up; our fathers and brothers; and as they went forth to the war, our hearts went with them. Hence it came about that many of our best young ministers went with them as chaplains; and our old ministers—pastors of our largest churches—often visited the army, and when in winter quarters, spent weeks with them, preaching the Gospel. For myself, I can say that some of the pleasantest recollections of my whole ministry are recollections of days—or rather nights—spent in preaching to the soldiers. (2) The bitter feelings engendered by the war, and which for a time forbade all friendly relations between the Presbyterian churches north and south, have now entirely passed away. Fraternal relations—which are really fraternal—have been established; and if organic union is not desired, on our side, it is not because of any lingering hostility or distrust remaining, but simply because we believe that the United Church would be too large and unwieldy to attend properly to its work.

On two separate occasions our Lord represents the work of the Gospel minister as that of a fisherman In Matthew 4, 18-22, we read: "And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishers. And he said unto them, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets and followed him. And going from thence he saw other two brethren, James, the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee, their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father and followed him." And in Luke 5, 4-11: "Now when he had left speaking, he saith unto Simon, launch out into the deep and let down your net for a draught. And Simon answered and said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night and taken nothing; nevertheless, at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had so done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes;

and their net brake"—was ready to break. "And they beckoned unto their partners which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came and filled both of the ships so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O, Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken. And so was also James and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land they forsook all and followed him."

On the occasion on which our Lord used this figure to set forth the nature of the Gospel minister's work, recorded by Matthew, we are told that He found James and John "mending their nets." Mending the net is as important a part of the work of a successful fisherman as "casting the net" after it is mended.

In the 13th Chapter of Matthew, that chapter of wonderful parables, our Lord closes his discourse with a parable beginning—"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind, which when it was full, they drew to shore and sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away." (Matt. 13, 47– 8) By "the kingdom of heaven" here represented by this net, we are undoubtedly to understand the Visible Church of God in the world.

With this net it is that the "fishers of men" have to labor. And experience teaches that in every age, those who have done effective work for the Master with it, have been compelled to spend no small portion of their time in "mending the net." When we consider the material of which the visible church on earth is made up—men and women "of every kind," and the best of them but partially sanctified—this should cause us no surprise. A net with so many slack-twisted and rotten strands, must needs often break; and before it can be cast with good effect, must needs be mended. Our Lord's own ministry was with a visible church, embracing a Judas Iscariot, a devil from the beginning, a doubting Thomas—to whom the fallible testimony of his senses was more trustworthy than the sure word of the Son of God—and a rash, self confident Peter, who could protest "though I should die with thee I will not deny thee," and then, before the morning dawned, deny his Master thrice. And with what infinite patience and unfailing love did He bear with the hypocrisy of Judas, and meet the unreasonable incredulity of Thomas, and pray for, and by his prayer save, the

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almost apostate Peter. Truly may it be said of his ministry that much of it was occupied in mending the old net.

And so, when we turn to the history of the Presbyterian Church in Virginia, for the last hundred years, we are not surprised to find that she has been called to pass through trial after trial: and the men who have been most efficient in the Master's service have been compelled—like the Master—with long-suffering forbearance, yet with an unwavering loyalty to the truth, to spend much of their time in mending the old net. It has been said that the secular history of Great Britain is largely made up of the story of rebellions and revolutions, and hard fought battles for the independence and integrity of the Empire. So, likewise, the history of the Church of God in the world, is made up largely of the story of struggles for the truth, now assailed from one side—now from another.

The history of the Presbyterian church in Virginia for the last hundred years, opens with an account of a conflict with French infidelity, so sore that the faith of many good men was ready to give way. Then follows the story of a great revival, marred and finally brought to a close by a fanaticism which threatened, for a time, to overthrow the orderly constitution and descent worship of the church. And then, we have the rending in twain of the Presbyterian church of the United States, of which the church in Virginia was a part, by a division of such a character and so accomplished that for a time it seemed as if brotherly love had forsaken the church altogether And lastly a bloody civil war, arraying Christian against Christian in mortal strife. And yet out of all these trials has the "good Lord" granted us a deliverance.

Had this centennial celebration occurred a few years ago, I should have closed this account by saying that though in the past much time had been taken up in mending the old net, we might now congratulate each other with the fact that it was in better condition than it had been for many years. Brethren, did not some of us indulge in vain-glorious boasting over the unbroken peace and perfect unity in faith of our Southern Presbyterian Church? Now, that the century has reached its close, we are obliged to confess that the old net has given 'way again: some slack-twisted —perhaps rotten—strand has broken, and the principal business of our General Assembly at its last meeting was to mend the old net again. Let us not be discouraged by this, "as though some strange thing had happened unto us," but, emulating the faith and courage of our Fathers, let us labor earnestly, honestly and

with cheerful confidence in the work which the Master has assigned us as the work of to-day.

And this leads me to a second remark. When our Lord repeated His representation of the work of Gospel minister as that of a fisherman, as the incident is recorded by Luke, Peter and his companions had been fishing all night, and caught nothing. And then, when with trembling yet obedient faith, they let down their net at the Master's bidding, they "enclosed such a multitude of fishes that the net was ready to brake" And this is but an illustration of what has ever been found true in the history of the church. The old net, if it were not God's net, would have gone to pieces long ago.

In the numberless trials, from every conceivable quarter, to which the Catholic Church Visible has been subject, she has, contrary to all judgment founded upon human probabilities, come out uninjured from the trials. And, to-day, she possesses larger numbers, and greater wealth, and profounder learning, and greater facilities for the discharge of her great commission—"Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature,"—than at any previous period of her history. So, with that portion of the church with which we are more immediately connected—the Presbyterian Church in Virginia—the closing years of the century leave her far in advance of the position she occupied at its beginning In 1788, the year in which our Synod was organized, the three Presbyteries of Hanover, Lexington and Abingdon, covering the territory now covered by the Synod, embraced 21 ministers and 2 licentiates. This year, as appears from the report to the General Assembly, our ten Presbyteries number 226 ministers and 16 licentiates—an increase of more than ten-fold.

The history of our church for the last hundred years, seems, at first sight, but a history of trial after trial—the story of the continual breaking and mending of the old net. Yet, does it furnish no good ground of discouragement. And certainly it is well adapted to enforce a lesson of wisdom which Solomon taught the men of his day, when he wrote: "Say not thou, what is the cause that the former days were better than these? For thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this" Ecc. 7, 10. Let us ever remember that the old net is the Lord's net. Is it broken? Let us labor diligently to mend the break. Is it whole? Though patched and mended in almost every part, let us, at the Lord's bidding, cheerfully "let it down into the sea," for it will doubtless "enclose a great multitude of fishes."

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